

THE OREM INTERURBAN RAILROAD DEPOT

Constructed: 1914

Address: 103 West 300 North

Present owner: Charles (Bud) Snedecor

As early as 1902 voices were raised that an electric interurban railroad would be built through Lehi. Interurbans were a direct outgrowth of city transit systems in the late nineteenth century. Trolley cars could be built for higher speeds than those feasible in local service. While common speeds were forty-fifty miles per hour, some systems could run even faster.

Interurban cars were usually bigger, more powerful, and more luxuriously furnished than city trolleys. electric railway cars could negotiate steeper grades and sharper curves than steam engines. Interurban lines were usually cheaper to build and could offer cheaper fares as well as more frequent and convenient service.

After several failed attempts, a group of Utah capitalists under the leadership of Walter C. Orem, finally succeeded in building the Salt Lake and Utah electric Railroad. This was popularly called the "Orem Interurban," and eventually linked the business district of Salt Lake City as far south as Payson.

The line through Lehi was built down the center of Third North, before turning south near Seventh East. The first passenger car of the Orem Line arrived in Lehi on 16 February 1914. On 23 March, regular daily service began between Salt Lake and American Fork. This included intermediate stops at Adams, Taylorsville, Granger, Bennion, West Jordan, South Jordan, Riverton, Bluffdale, Jordan Narrows, Kirkham (Jordan River), and Lehi.

The "Big Red Cars," with gilt trimmings, were sixty-two feet long and nine feet wide. Decorated with mahogany interior trimmings and leather-upholstered seats, each unit had a smoking compartment, drinking fountain, steam heat, electric lights, overhead racks for storage, and a Pullman-type rear vestibule with folding gate.

Each unit was equipped with multiple control systems, whereby a car could supply its own power or be coupled into a train. The crew, normally consisting of a motorman, conductor, and brakeman, transported Lehi passengers to downtown Salt Lake City in seventy-three minutes.

The Lehi depot for the Salt Lake & Utah Railroad was erected in July of 1914, on the southwest corner of Third North and First West. The pre-fabricated cement building, thirty-two feet wide and fifty feet long, was built in Salt Lake City and shipped to Lehi in sections.

The northeast corner of the completed depot housed an eighteen-by-eighteen-foot waiting room with double doors opening both to the north and east. The baggage/express room was in a fourteen-by-eighteen-foot room in the northwest corner. The ticket office, between the waiting room and the baggage room, projected six feet farther north than the rest of the building. On each side of the ticket office and in front of the waiting and baggage rooms were porches that were six feet wide.

The prosperity of the line began to falter during the Depression. The end of World War II brought about the company's demise. The 2 August 1946 "Lehi Free Press" announced that Salt Lake & Utah Railroad assets had been sold in auction. The corporation was dissolved by Judge Clarence E. Baker on December 27, 1946.

The Denver & Rio Grande and the Bamberger Railroads purchased most of the trackage and equipment. Raymond Stewart, owner of the Lehi Cereal Mill, purchased the track for salvage. Jack Beveridge successfully bid \$4,000 for the Lehi depot and in 1947 sold it to Jack and Elroy M. Lamph. They soon converted it into an automobile repair shop. It was later remodeled into a residence, and remains a private home today.